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HOSPITAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

IN CHARGE OF
MARY M. RIDDLE. R.N.

THE HOME LIFE OF THE PUPIL NURSE

By MYRTLE YOUNG

Physical and Social Director of Nurses, Newton Hospital

What are the needs of the pupil nurse which the home life of the institution should supply? Her hours being long and her duties absorbing, she has less time or inclination to seek inspiration and diversion apart from her work than almost any other woman in professional training. For the time being she is, perhaps, somewhat apart from the other workers of the world and as a result her interests narrow. Unless her home life reflects a genial warmth which calls forth her spirit of hospitality, her charm of voice and manner, unless her viewpoint is broadened by occasional contact with those who represent progress in other than her chosen field, and unless her soul is moved with thoughtful contemplation of the deeper things of life, she has missed much in her pursuit of a technical training, and as a graduate nurse may feel a lack when she compares herself with the women of other professions. This twentieth century atmosphere must be regarded. We have gone a long way forward in the last thirty years and, upon the whole, the progress has been along lines of elevation and dignity.

Through the kindly generosity and thoughtful interest of the trustees of the Newton Hospital Training School for Nurses, the school home is beautifully located and provided with all the comforts and many of the luxuries to be found in any well-ordered home. Not alone have the physical needs been considered, but those of the mind and soul, for music, pictures, books, and magazines are here in happy plenty. With loyal enthusiasm, the officers of the school have given freely of their own time in directing the social activities of the pupil nurses along those lines which make for the greatest pleasure of all and the establishing of a genial home spirit.

Now in this delightful environment the question has arisen whether with this excellent equipment each nurse is receiving the highest degree

of comfort, pleasure and profit. After trustees have provided, and officers have directed, is there not lacking much of the real home background which could be in part supplied if these daughters of many mothers continue in the institutional home to be like Mrs. Browning's heroine in a familiar poem, "'Tis her thinking of others, makes you think of her." Cannot the same generous and impersonal spirit which characterizes the nurses' work continue filling every little space and crevice of her temporary home with sunshine and sweetness? There are numberless little services which make for the pleasure and comfort of each other that no helper in the work of the home can be expected to perform and yet they are so important that in their performance there lies the difference between a "place to live" and "home." Our pleasure in a favorite picture, song or book is often doubled in the knowledge that we have helped another to an appreciation of it. And here appears an opportunity to increase the interest and pleasure of every nurse in her training school home, mainly by leading her to an appreciation of all that the kindly forethought of others has provided and then suggesting that she lend a hand for the same end to others.

Her spirit of hospitality may express itself most informally and delightfully in the bi-monthly club meetings. These are class organizations which meet for an evening hour for a short discussion of current events, a new book, or to relax in the joy of a half hour's dancing. Then follows the business meeting which is usually of the briefest kind and then the two hostesses of the hour serve their guests a dainty refreshment. Occasionally a guest, a representative of another club, a graduate nurse, or an officer, will give real pleasure by her presence at this play hour. On a more extensive scale, a group of nurses may serve as entertainers, ushers, or waitresses at a Saturday Night Party; not a big effort only a quiet evening in the living room with songs and stories, a masquerade dance in the recreation room, or a little talk on another land with accompanying pictures.

And on the seventh day, what then? Rest? Yes, a half day, and how thankfully received only a nurse perhaps can tell. But what of the institution of the Sabbath? Every encouragement to church attendance may be given and yet the exigencies of the hospital doubtless do sometimes prevent the carrying out of good intentions, and vesper services can be held in the Home at different hours for day and night nurses. Under a Young Woman's Christian Association organization these services apparently can do the greatest amount of good, nurses are actively engaged in Christian work, closely related to a great world service for all women, they come in actual contact with inspiring speakers and their interests go far beyond the confines of their own school.

Among a host of other questions as to what the home life should do for the general development of this young woman comes the query in regard to her health. In some instances she comes to her training with a well-established order of physical exercises and, appreciating their inestimable value, continues her regular exercises in the open air, if only for a few minutes a day, but there are many, too, accustomed to a more or less irregular outdoor life who continue their previous régime most irregularly. The result is a succession of days spent in the ward and class-room without the invigorating tonic of God's out of doors.

Our complex hospital life gets us running many times into grooves, so that we are apt to miss for long periods the all-round completer life. We are led at times almost to forget that the stars come nightly to the sky, or even that there is a sky, and we need changes from the duties and cares of our accustomed everyday life. They are necessary for healthy normal living. Tennis, skating, walking, or just sitting down in a restful spot by oneself *alone* will do wonders. A half hour, alone in the quiet, would be a source of gain to many. A walk in the early morning in the woods and fields will bring the night nurse into closer contact with all inanimate nature and cannot fail to find her growing in love and appreciation of it. She needs these changes to get the kinks out of her mind and her nerves, and to whet again the edge of appetite.

It is not so much the question of how much time one has, as what one does with that which one has. In the nearby future, we may look to see systematic physical training for the pupil nurse quite as much as for any other young woman preparing to earn her livelihood, and what happier road to follow could there be than along the path of study in the science of tone production which leads you back to one of nature's perfect gifts, a beautiful voice. Dr. G. A. Brouillet summarizes conditions in his recent book, *Artistic Tone Production through Natural Breathing*. The principles of tone production are the same for all the arts pertaining to the voice, namely, speaking, reading and singing. The lungs are the motive power of the vocal organs and to become a good speaker or reader, one has to be the possessor of healthy lungs. Practical anatomy shows that the lungs in people of today, through lack of proper exercise, do not get the intended development, hence the few good voices we now hear. In a professional way, and as a satisfaction to herself, the pupil nurse is making a valuable gain when she acquires the principles of tone production. At the same time she is keeping herself in excellent physical trim, for the foundation of all use of the voice lies in the breath. A few minutes each day, week after week, and month after month, will do wonders. Exercises can be

practiced almost anywhere, and at almost any time during a busy day, although the open air is most to be desired. After one month's trial with only one class hour a week, the results appear so encouraging that we believe a partial solution is found to this vexing problem of physical exercise. The nurse's duties are physically oftentimes too arduous to require of her a different physical exercise when she is off duty, even though in many ways it may be something much to be desired. By this method she is not over-taxing herself; she has a definite object in being in the open, if only for a few minutes each day.

"It is not always the ablest and best trained physician who gains the largest practice and the greatest fame," suggests Dr. T. D. Crothers, superintendent of a Hartford, Conn., hospital, and he finds a new reason for their failure in the lamentable lack of musical, well-trained voices among members of his profession. "A good voice not only creates a favorable impression of ability, but it is often of positive benefit to a patient." How necessary the systematic training is to the nurse we can realize only when instead of the harsh, broken tone with the nasal inflections, we hear the voice of one of Shakespeare's women:

Her voice was ever gentle, soft, and low,
An excellent thing in woman.

Briefly, then, our institutional home needs to take the place of the family circle, to radiate hospitality, to bring within its walls men and women whose tales of inspiring work are in other fields and to supplement around the hearthstone the technical training of the school. Our aim is to invite the mind and soul of each young woman to new possibilities and powers.